

# THE ROWSER MURAL

## THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MURAL

“THE WISDOM OR UNWISDOM OF A NEW GENERATION MUST LARGELY DEPEND ON ITS KNOWLEDGE AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FACTS AND FORCES THAT OPERATED IN THE GENERATIONS PRECEDING...”

MONCURE CONWAY, 1904

African American history in Stafford starts in the late 1600's when slaves were brought into the sparsely settled Rappahannock Valley to serve as agricultural laborers. In the intervening 350 years, communities coalesced, vibrant churches began, and bold individuals stepped forward to shape the character of the County. Highlights of the mural include:

- THE ARRIVAL & EARLY YEARS
- THOSE WHO PASSED THROUGH
- FOUNDATION OF FAITH
- EDUCATION DURING SEGREGATION
- THE TIE THAT BINDS: NAACP
- INTEGRATION
- LITTLE KNOWN FACTS AND FIRSTS
- KEEPERS OF THE HISTORY
- 350 YEARS AND BEYOND

### THE ROWSER BUILDING STAFFORD AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MURAL

The Stafford African American History Mural was installed in the historic Rowser Building in 2014 as a permanent exhibit for the County's 350th anniversary. The mural's mission is to tell Stafford's story through the African American experience. Many individuals contributed to the creation of the mural, with special acknowledgement to the following:

- NAACP - Stafford County Chapter
- Stafford County Historical Society
- Stafford County Parks & Recreation
- Stafford County 350th Committee
- Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church
- United Faith Christian Ministry
- Linda Silk, Wink Ventures
- Creative Color
- Freelance-Star



STAFFORD

*The Path to Freedom*

EDUCATION

*The Path to Opportunity*

THE ROWSER BUILDING  
STAFFORD AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MURAL



COVER:  
*Arrival of Negro family in the lines, Library of Congress  
September 1961, Free Lance-Star*

INSIDE COVER:  
*Mural, Aleks Dolzenko/Stafford County Sun*

INSIDE PANELS:  
*Stafford Training School, Free Lance-Star*

VISIT THE MURAL AT THE  
HISTORIC ROWSER BUILDING  
1739 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Stafford, VA 22554

Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. Monday - Friday



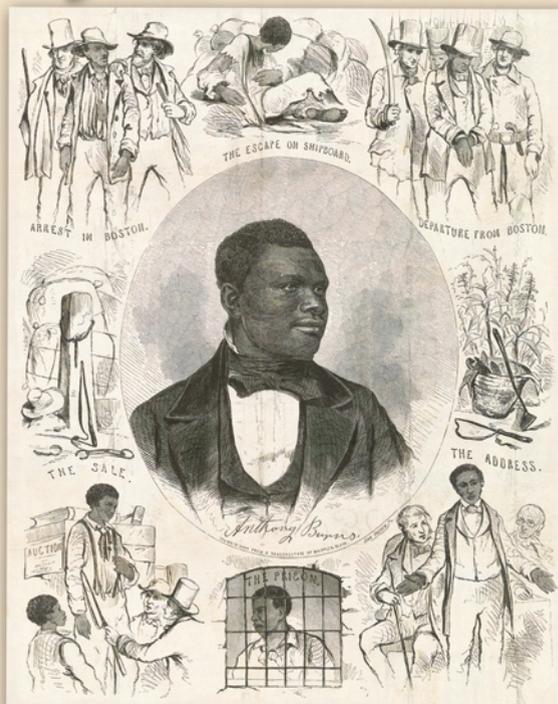
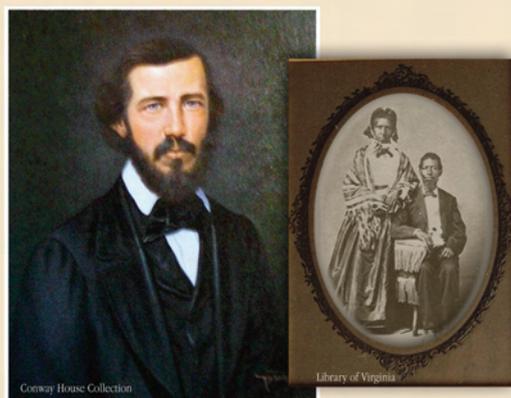
# The Path to Freedom

## THE TRAILBLAZERS

An estimated 10,000 self-emancipated slaves passed through Stafford before the Battle of Fredericksburg in 1862.

Anthony Burns, a slave born in Stafford County, became the most famous fugitive slave from Virginia, and his trial increased Northern defiance of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. ▶

Stafford County abolitionist Moncure Conway secured freedom for former Conway family slaves Eliza and Dunmore Gwinn, along with twenty-nine other slaves formerly of his father's household. ▼



THE NARRATIVE OF HENRY "BOX" BROWN, WHO MAILED HIMSELF TO FREEDOM IN 1849, IS RECOUNTED ON THE MURAL, WITH A FULL PAGE FROM HIS JOURNAL TELLING OF HIS HARROWING NEAR-SUFFOCATION ON THE DOCKS AT AQUIA LANDING.



# The Path to Opportunity

## THE CHAMPIONS

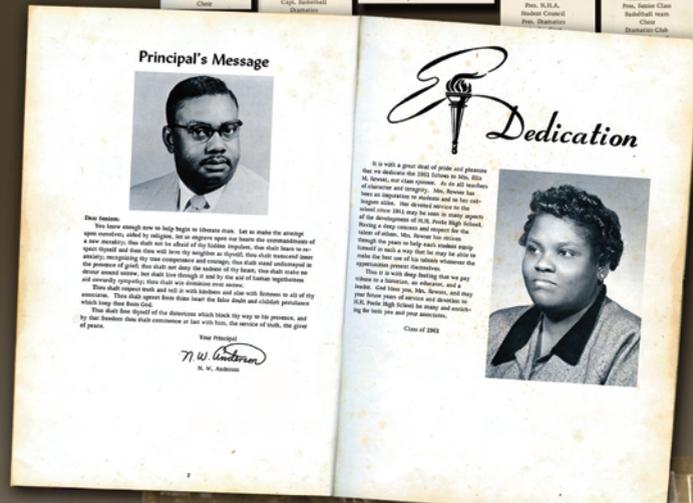


Henry Harrison "H.H." Poole led the grassroots effort to raise money to purchase land for a Black high school in the county and in 1939 the Stafford Training School for Negroes began as a four-teacher school building for Black students. In 1954, the school was renamed the H.H. Poole Junior High School, and in 1977 it was renamed the Rowser Building, after beloved educator Ella Rowser.



### We helped open some doors. Somebody had to try.

## Five fought for equality



THE STAFFORD SCHOOL SYSTEM STARTED THE INTEGRATION PROCESS IN SEPTEMBER 1961. CYNTHIA MONTAGUE (ABOVE) AND HER SISTER DORETHA WERE THE FIRST BLACK STUDENTS TO ATTEND THE ALL-WHITE STAFFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

